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Received: 3 January 2022 | Revised: 3 May 2023 | Accepted: 9 May 2023

DOI: 10.1111/puar.13670

SCHOLARLY TAKES

PAR Public Administration Review ASPA

Natural born violence? Understanding street-level bureaucrats' use of violence: Police officers and protests

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Abstract
What factors influence street-level bureaucrats' (SLBs) use of violence? To answer this question, we focus on police officers, a typical example of SLBs, who can lawfully use violence whenever they deem it necessary. Based on ethnographic work among Brazilian police officers dealing with protests, we analyze how violence erupts in the interaction between police officers and protesters. We contribute to the literature by suggesting that no single factor alone can explain the actions of SLBs regarding the use of violence, as previous research has posited. We demonstrate how the interplay between four factors explains the use of violence by SLBs: (1) institutional logic, (2) type of situation, (3) desire for revenge and having fun, and (4) lack of accountability. As such, we propose a more complex account of SLB's use of violence.

Evidence for practice

- We highlight the importance of developing less violent institutional logic, especially among police officers. Public organizations should invest in training and socialization that reject violence as a legitimate reaction to any situation
- We demonstrate the importance of accountability to limit and prevent the use of violence at the street level. Holding SLBs and individuals accountable for their use of violence should help reduce it
- The findings indicate the importance of managers' training and sensitizing their teams about how SLBs should deal with different types of citizens. Managers should teach them not to judge and evaluate them based on stereotypes. Training should involve learning certain techniques other than violence to deal with provocative situations

INTRODUCTION

Encounters between street-level bureaucrats (SLBs) and citizens are often full of tension (Lipsky, 2010). Such situations, characterized by their lack of predictability, strong demands, and lack of information and resources, might become ticking time bombs (Davidovitz & Cohen, 2022; Tummers, Bekkers, & Steijn, 2012). Many scholars have noted the existence of violence in organizations (Costas & Grey, 2019) and at the street level (Davidovitz & Cohen, 2022; Lotta, Lima-Silva, & Favareto, 2021; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Nguyen & Velayutham, 2018). The literature also shows that SLBs may become violent when moving against certain "clients"[1] (Tummers, Bekkers, Vink, & Musheno, 2015) or facing risky and threatening situations (Alpes & Spire, 2014). What remains to be explained is under what circumstances SLBs (e.g., parking inspectors, forest guards, or prison guards) decide to use violence against citizens.

Police officers are a typical example of SLBs (Morrell & Currie, 2015). They are the frontline enforcers of state laws (Cohen & Golan-Nadir, 2020). Like other SLBs, they have to make quick decisions in very unpredictable situations (Raaphorst & Van de Walle, 2017). However, police officers are more likely to encounter violence than other types of SLBs, as their daily work involves dealing with risky situations, conflict, and threats (Cohen & Cohen, 2023).

While SLBs often deliver services and benefits, police officers may also need to inflict punishment using violence (Epp, Maynard-Moody, & Haider-Markel, 2017). Police officers can lawfully use violence against citizens when they deem it necessary (Morrell & Currie, 2015), and the decision to use violence is at their discretion, just as other SLBs. Some studies have recently identified some

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factors that may influence the use of violence at the street level, such as the race of the citizens (Gaynor, Kang, & Williams, 2021; Headley & James Wright, 2020; Wright II & Headley, 2020); organizational culture (Myers-Montgomery, 2016); and trust and relationship between police officers and the community (Masterson, 1988; Newburn et al., 2018; Perez, Berg, & Myers, 2003). However, the use of violence varies considerably (Hui, Yixuan, & Na, 2020; Lumb & Friday, 1997), and no research has been able to give a comprehensive explanation as to why police officers, in particular, and SLBs in general, decide to use violence against some citizens in very specific contexts.

In this paper, we contribute to the research on SLBs by understanding the factors that motivate SLBs to use violence against citizens. We follow the view that "violence includes intentional harm caused to the individual through verbal threats and/or physical force to people and/or property" (Crawford & Tina Dacin, 2020, p. 1258).

We focus on the context of police officers during protests. Handling a protest is an extremely challenging task because it is unpopular and involves potential conflicts among stakeholders (Morrell & Currie, 2015). Protests require rapid decisions in a very dynamic and uncontrolled setting (Maguire, 2021; Maguire & Oakley, 2020), in which the authority of police officers can be questioned and the use of violence may become a tool to reestablish public order. We use rowdy protests as an extreme case (Eisenhardt, 1989) because the phenomenon is "transparent observable" (Pettigrew, 1990, p. 275), allowing us to see the conditions under which SLBs decide to use violence while carrying out their tasks. When analyzing this case, we propose a more comprehensive explanation of the use of violence by SLBs. Empirically, we use protests in Brazil that led to violent reactions by police officers against the protesters. Our data come from an ethnographic study with police officers after protests in which they used violence.

Street-level bureaucrats' and violence

SLBs may develop practices that can move toward citizens, away from them, or against them (Tummers & Bekkers, 2014). While the literature has attempted to explain why SLBs decide to move toward citizens based on altruism and social values (e.g., Cohen & Hertz, 2020; Keiser, 2010; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Riccucci, 2005; Tummers & Bekkers, 2014), there are few explanations about why they decide to move against some citizens (Davidovitz & Cohen, 2022) and, more specifically, why they decide to use violence against them.

When analyzing what influences SLB practices, scholars point out that organizational (Brodkin, 2011) and environmental (Cohen, 2018) conditions matter. Despite being apparently chaotic, their decisions are neither unique nor random (Epp et al., 2017; Rutz, Mathew, Robben, & de Bont, 2017). SLB practices are strongly institutionalized (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003, 2022, 2012; Maynard-Moody & Portillo, 2010; Musheno & Maynard-Moody, 2015), heavily regulated, and influenced by the organizations for which they work (Brodkin, 2011; May & Winter, 2009; Walker & Gilson, 2004). Some of the factors involved include the expectations of their peers and supervisors (Cohen & Golan-Nadir, 2020; Gofen, 2014; Huising & Silbey, 2011). Practices are learned and legitimated by rules, training, and laws and are usually commonly accepted (Epp, Maynard-Moody, & Haider-Markel, 2014). SLBs are socially skilled and learn their practices inside their organizations (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2012; Tucker, Hendy, & Chrysanthaki, 2021).

Tension and violence are part of the working context of SLBs (Davidovitz & Cohen, 2022; Lotta et al., 2021). Scholars describe the street level and its organizations as violent workplaces (Koritsas, Coles, & Boyle, 2010) or dangerous places (Oberfield, 2014). Indeed, encounters between bureaucrats and citizens can become violent (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003), especially when dealing with the "bad guys" (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003, 166) or immoral citizens (Holmberg, 2000; Raaphorst & Van de Walle, 2017). In these cases, encounters are tense because SLBs do not know how citizens will react to them (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003) or even violently (Davidovitz & Cohen, 2022). Research cites many examples of situations in which citizens react violently against SLBs (Lotta et al., 2021; Robson, Cossar, & Quayle, 2014; Tummers et al., 2015), particularly against probation staff (Sabbe, Moyson, & Schiffino, 2021) and police officers. However, while there are studies of how SLBs react when citizens act violently against them (Davidovitz & Cohen, 2022; Lotta et al., 2021), we lack an understanding of why and when SLBs use violence against citizens and which factors influence the decision to be violent, as well as the interplay between these factors.

Police officers are examples of SLBs (Portillo & Rudes, 2014), whose practices must be understood within the context in which they are socialized and legitimized daily (Tucker et al., 2021). Daily practices, such as stop-and-frisk, are strongly influenced by institutional logics, including racial bias (Epp et al., 2017). Even their willingness to take risks (Cohen & Golan-Nadir, 2020), their judgment of citizens (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2012), and their social value orientation (Cohen & Hertz, 2020) may be mediated by the organization and the environment. At the same time, unlike other SLBs, encounters between police officers and citizens often involve the legitimate use of force to ensure public order (Morrell & Currie, 2015). However, the question remains unanswered: why do SLBs decide to use violence against citizens?

Police officers and the use of violence

In recent years, some scholars have analyzed cases in which police officers act violently from different perspectives. For some scholars, police culture is a central factor (Myers-Montgomery, 2016). For example, scholars in the

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US have discussed two common policing philosophies: warriors versus guardians (Marenin, 2016; Rahr & Rice, 2015; Stoughton, 2016). Warriors see themselves as crime fighters, whereas guardians work with the public to reduce crime (McLean, Wolfe, Rojek, Alpert, & Smith, 2019). Many formal and informal aspects of police training and daily activities reinforce the notion of warriors, even though this encourages the police to distrust the public and use violence when not strictly necessary (Stoughton, 2014). The warrior police mentality emphasizes aggressive policing (Carlson, 2020), which may be associated with violence against the public.

Another explanation in the literature is that the relationship between police officers and the community plays a role in the decision to use violence, and social distance and a lack of trust between police officers and the community increase the chances of violent actions (Masterson, 1988; Newburn et al., 2018; Perez et al., 2003). Besides, some authors also argue that the use of violence varies considering the accountability of the situation. When police officers feel they are controlled and observed, they tend to use less violence (Cronin & Reicher, 2009; Kroon, Van Kreveld, & Rabbie, 1991).

For other scholars, the explanation for police violence comes from the profile of citizens (De Lint, 2005), especially regarding racial identity and minority groups (Bernasconi, 2014; Bradford, Milani, & Jackson, 2017; Carter, 1987; Conyers, 1981; Cronin & Reicher, 2009; Kochel, 2020; Newburn et al., 2018; Perez et al., 2003).

Analyzing protests in particular, scholars observed that police work can vary considerably (Maguire, 2021) between soft and hard repression (Hui et al., 2020; Lumb & Friday, 1997). One explanation for this variation is related to the features and management of the event. For example, analyzing a large protest in 1999 in London, Cronin and Reicher (2009) show how the previous tensions between police officers and protesters led to violent conflicts. Newburn et al. (2018) reached a similar conclusion when also analyzing protests in the UK, but in 2011. They indicate that previous resentment between the police and citizens led to an increase in the use of violence. Bradford et al. (2017) focus on the issue of the police's legitimacy. They suggest that the legitimacy that citizens accord the police and the citizens' social identity explain the variations in how society accepts the police's use of force. Myers-Montgomery (2016) draws a similar conclusion regarding the importance of the legitimacy afforded to the police in explaining the acceptance of their use of force. Finally, Kochel's (2020) analysis of the US protests in Ferguson in 2014 notes that the police officers' race influenced how they dealt with the violence.

As shown above, previous research on the use of violence by police officers has been successful in identifying certain factors that may influence the use of force. However, these studies have fallen short in explaining why the use of violence is restricted to certain situations and what influences its use. Additionally, most of the research in this area has been conducted in the United States and the UK. Therefore, although these studies provide interesting explanations as to why the police respond violently in certain situations, we still miss a more comprehensive understanding of the use of violence by police officers, in particular, and SLBs in general. To fill this gap, we analyze the interaction of both formal and informal factors by observing the actions of Brazilian police officers during protests as an extreme case.

The context: Police officers and protesters in Brazil

Portugal colonized Brazil in 1500 to produce agricultural products (Skidmore, 2009). It used slaves to harvest sugar cane, the main Brazilian export at the time. Slavery existed from 1535 until 1888, leaving a profound mark on Brazilian society that survives to this day (for an overview of Brazilian history, please see: Schwarcz & Starling, 2015; Skidmore, 2009).

The long period of slavery in Brazil, coupled with the persistent socioeconomic exclusion of the black population, is one of the main explanations for the high levels of crime and police brutality in Brazil (Mitchell & Wood, 1999). Police forces were created in Brazil to suppress republican and abolitionist movements, and recapture runaway slaves (Holloway, 1997). Thus, since then, the police have been used to "oppress and discipline slaves, quell slave uprisings and protect the small, European minority from the poor, black, enslaved majority" (Husain, 2009, p. 49). During Brazil's military regime from 1964 to 1984, the police confronted the regime's opposition (Husain, 2009). Thus, the police in Brazil have a long tradition of protecting the wealthy and influential at the expense of society's have-nots. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that this history also affects the institutional logic of the police force about when to use force.

Indeed, Brazil has one of the highest crime rates in the world, with a strong presence of organized crime. Racism and brutality are prevailing elements of local police forces (Alcadipani, Silva, Bueno, Sergio, & de Lima., 2021). Data about crime and police violence in Brazil are of great concern. According to the Brazilian Forum on Public Safety, in 2020, 50,033 people were violently killed and 6416 people were killed by the police. In contrast, 194 police officers were murdered in the country. The same Brazilian Forum on Public Safety indicates there are more than 500,000 police officers in all the police forces in Brazil.

The patrol and riot police

We focus on a specific law enforcement agency in Brazil: the patrol and riot police. We use the acronym PRP to preserve the anonymity of the law enforcement agency discussed here. The PRP carries out crime prevention activities, such as patrolling the streets, responding to emergency calls, dealing with traffic offenses, and

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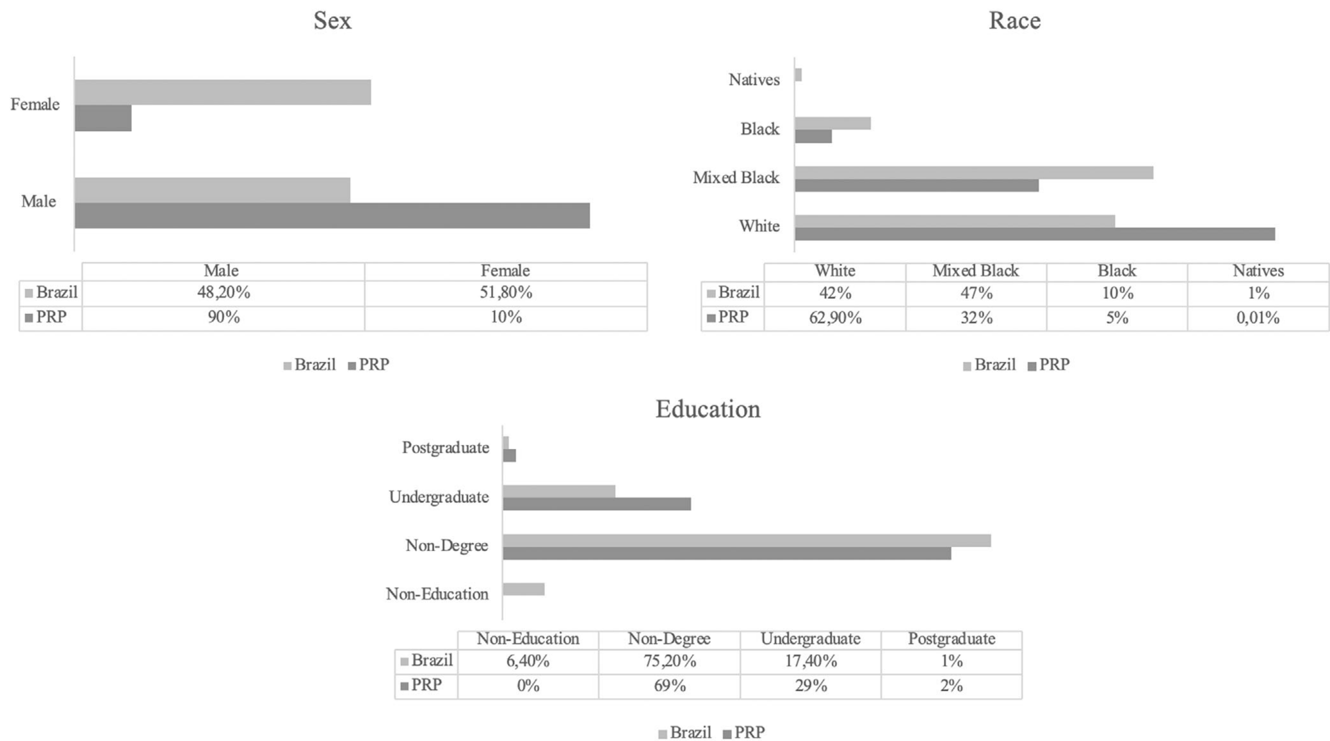

FIGURE 1 Composition of the PRP in comparison to the Brazilian population. Official data from PRP and national census (IBGE).

overseeing riot control. In other words, it functions in a manner similar to a police force in the UK or the US, except it does not investigate crime, which is the job of another law enforcement agency. In addition, the PRP is understaffed due to state budget restrictions. Thus, its 80,000 officers are constantly on the frontlines and often overworked. Figure 1 compares the composition of the PRP and the general Brazilian population by gender, race, and education. As the data show, the PRP is more male, white, and educated than the general population.

Police work in the developing world is very challenging. Moreover, because salaries are low, when police officers are off duty, they often take on another job to supplement their income. The force faces several problems, such as high rates of suicide and various occupational diseases (Miranda et al., 2020), and the PRP has little confidence in the public and vice versa. There are frequent cases of PRP brutality reported in the news, especially in poor areas. In addition, the PRP is an extremely lethal police force, killing more people in just one year than the US police kills in five years[2].

METHODOLOGY

Data collection

Researchers have maintained that studying extreme examples of a phenomenon is recommended because the phenomenon is more transparent and evident (Eisenhardt, 1989; Pettigrew, 1990), making it easier to observe and analyze (Eisenhardt, Graebner, & Sonenshein, 2016). For Pratt (2000, p. 458), "extreme cases facilitate theory building because the dynamic being examined tends to be more visible than might be in other contexts." Adopting this approach, we examined how the PRP works during protests as an extreme case of SLB violence against citizens. Despite the fact that such a case is not representative (Eisenhardt et al., 2016), we maintain that it can offer new insights into theory building.

For data collection, we relied on an ethnographic study compiled during nine months of fieldwork observing the actions of the PRP in rowdy protests where violence was likely to erupt. During this time, sixteen protests occurred, four of which lasted for more than 5 h. When observing the protests, the ethnographer often stayed at the protest from the time the police arrived until the protest finished. The ethnographer was allowed to follow the police officers, observe their activities in preparing for the protests, and attend meetings inside police headquarters. During the most intense period of the protests, these events occurred once a week, usually on Fridays and bank holidays. Each protest lasted for several hours. Each day, the ethnographer wrote field notes and memos (Fretz, Emerson, & Shaw, 1995). During the protests, the ethnographer took brief notes and audio recorded some of the phrases he heard. Of particular interest were conversations he had with police officers and protesters and situations he observed while the

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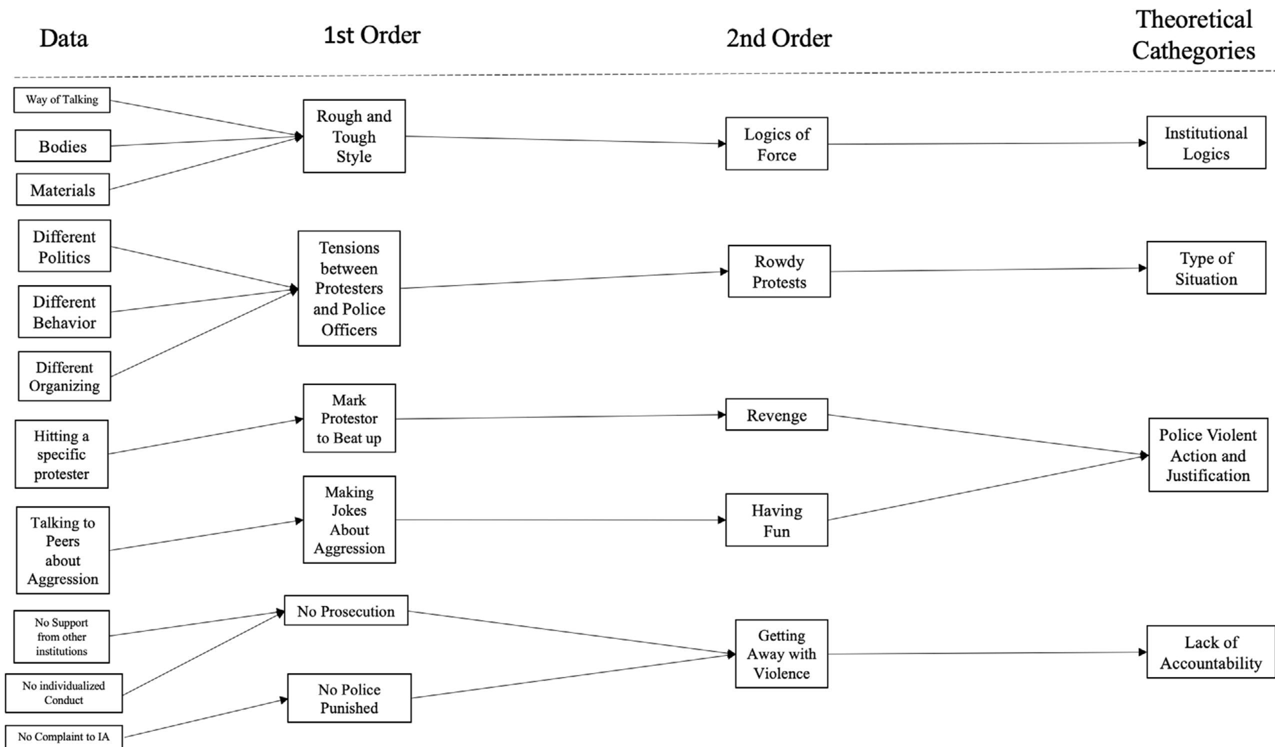

FIGURE 2 Coding chart. Own elaboration.

protest unfolded. Later, he expanded these notes and supplemented them with photographs and short videos he had taken. These detailed notes comprise a research journal that we used to interpret the PRP's actions during the protests. We did not analyze data from social media, which might be a limitation of our study. However, our goal was to understand the elements that affect SLBs directly during a situation in which they have to use their discretion. We believe that social media has a more indirect effect on them.

Data analysis

We used an inductive research process based on a theory-building approach that originates from the "thick description" of the field to generate an account that is both analytical and integrated into theory (Van Maanen, 1979). We began by following Spradley's (1980) approach to ethnographic data collection and analysis. He (1980, p. 14) maintains that "before you impose your theories on the people you study, find out how those people define the world" and advocates that ethnographic research should move back and forth between data collection and data analysis to inform further data collection, creating an "ethnographic research cycle."

We adopted a similar approach that involved moving between the data and the emerging theory (Charmaz, 2006). We coded every line of the ethnographer's research journal, trying to discern the "thick description". During this process, themes such as a "rough and tough" police style, order, disorder, liberal, conservative, and violence emerged. Then, we conducted axial coding of the data to make sense of each of the categories and dimensions that emerged. Figure 2 illustrates our coding chart.

FINDINGS

We identified four factors that influence the use of violence by police officers. First, the institutional logic of the police force, which values the use of force and the use of violence, associating it with an image of power and virility. Second, the use of violence depends on the characteristics of the situation, such as who the protesters are, what the cause of the protest is, and the dynamics of the protest that can lead to different degrees of tension. Third, the desire for revenge and having fun. Police officers use protests as moments when they can seek revenge against the enemy (protesters) and have fun using force. The fourth factor is the lack of accountability. Police officers seem to feel that they can get away with using violence during protests. Therefore, they are not afraid to do so.

Constructing the institutional logic: The PRP's training

The PRP is a full-blown military institution. All officers wear military uniforms, and the organization has several

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military ceremonies. The heavily armed police officers, or soldiers, as they are called, are organized into units similar to the military. Indeed, one commander talking about the public image of the PRP described it in these terms: "the beast has to show its teeth to be respected in the jungle." All of these factors reinforce the idea of the police as warriors.

Similar to the military, candidates enter the PRP as either soldiers, who can rise to at most sub-lieutenants, or officials, who start as lieutenants and can become colonels. The selection process for both tracks is very competitive. For soldiers, there are 43 applicants for each job, and for officials, there are 86. All candidates take multiple-choice tests on criminal law and human rights and undergo a physical and psychological examination, which includes an interview with a psychologist. Those who are accepted enter one of three police academies: one for soldiers, sergeants, and officials. The soldiers' course lasts one year, and the officials' course is four years and is considered equivalent to an undergraduate degree. Both academies teach law, human rights, and practical police work such as self-defense, driving police cars, and using firearms. For officials, the training also includes courses in management, leadership, and how to support the civilian authorities. In addition, officers must return periodically to the academy for ongoing training in order to be promoted. Police officers can be promoted only if they do the mandatory training, but promotion is automatic after the training. Officials who become colonels receive that rank through the votes of other colonels. Broadly speaking, the official training is well structured and organized. Police officers have a 3-year probation period after which, if they have not been caught doing illegal activities, they are confirmed in their roles. Officials have a 6-month period in which a senior official oversees their work.

However, officials complain a great deal about the "informal curriculum" of violence and brutality that police officers learn when they go out on the streets. Police officers tend to see themselves as "criminal hunters," underscoring their sense of being warriors. One official commented: "Our education is very good and professional, but when officers go on duty they learn the street code," becoming street-wise workers (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2022). In the case of protests, the "informal curriculum" tells police officers to be violent against people they deem "vandals."

The notion of order is deeply embedded in the PRP. This notion starts with a "decent" haircut, being shaved, and wearing an ironed uniform. Women are not allowed to wear earrings, bracelets, or any type of jewelry at work. Tattoos are also not allowed. All police cars have to be clean before going out on police duty. The buildings are very well organized. The police officers have to walk properly and have to keep fit. One of the key PRP mandates is to "maintain public order." As noted above, the history of the Brazilian police is associated with force and violence and this helps us understand the roots of the PRP's logic of force.

Being a police officer in the PRP is associated with being someone who demands respect, and is willing to impose that respect, if necessary, by force. For example, during one protest, a protester sat on the hood of a police car. The "owner" of the car said very aggressively: "Get your ass off my car now! Don't you dare sit on it again or I will blow your head off, fucker." The ethnographer learned later that sitting on a police car is a signal of disrespect to the police and to the individual police officer, who usually takes it personally.

When a new commander arrived at the PRP battalion where the research was carried out and the protesters were becoming violent and breaking bank windows, he said: "I am the police. I am now the boss here and I am here to solve this situation. I won't be cowed by these protesters. I will use every means to sort this situation out." The PRP feels it is their duty to resolve a problematic situation by any means necessary. As one commander said: "We are obligated to protect society, be it from robbers, be it from vandals." The officers regarded the acts of vandalism as an attack on society and the police. They said: "We don't tolerate vandalism. We can't see stuff being broken and do nothing. If a window is broken, we will chase the perpetrator with all our strength." In all of these examples, there is a basic assumption in this institutional logic that society is divided into two groups: citizens who should be protected and citizens who are inflicting harm on those who should be protected. According to this logic, it is the job of the police as warriors to protect the first group from the second.

Moreover, in several protests, this warrior mentality was clearly evident in the PRP's display of force. Typically, the ethnographer arrived 4 h before the protests were due to start. Most of these protests involved 2000 protesters at most. Nevertheless, the PRP deployed 4000 police officers from different administrative and special force units. All of the officers were wearing helmets, carrying shields, and batons, as well as their pistols on their belts. Some units had tear gas, smoke bombs, and rubber bullet weapons. There were also police officers on horseback all in position when the protesters arrived. The PRP uses a "saturation policy" when they stop and frisk almost everyone who arrives at the protest. They also kept doing military maneuvers while the protesters were starting the protest. Guided by the blast of a military bugler, police officers moved from one side to the other and showed their weapons. The protesters usually chatted among themselves and sang songs, totally ignoring the PRP's display of force.

Once the protest started, the PRP had to position its people and equipment, which usually takes longer than it takes for the protesters to move. Therefore, the PRP had police officers on motorbikes follow the protesters. The PRP also created a special unit called the "arms platoon" composed of police officers trained in martial arts and also used a special military exoskeleton to physically engage with "the vandals." All of the training revolved

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around improving their physical abilities. However, there was no training in how to best spot someone who carried out an act of vandalism, how to de-escalate conflicts, or how to respond to protesters' provocations in less violent or more sophisticated ways. The warrior values dominated the PRP's institutional logic.

Type of situation: Rowdy protests and tensions between police officers and protesters

"Professor, we have hundreds of protests every year in our area. It is just a few when order breaks down and there is a confrontation between the vandals and the police." That was a common comment made by PRP officers when there were complaints about the protests in which there was a confrontation between police and protesters. Some of these protests involved young people who were demanding changes to the city's public transport policies. They usually involved fewer than 400 people, and at their height, there were rarely more than 3000. The protests were also attended by "black blocs" of no more than 30 individuals, who usually smashed some bank windows during the protest. The vast majority of protesters were law-abiding citizens. The area where the PRP battalion is located is one of the most famous financial districts in Latin America, containing important financial and cultural institutions. It is also an area historically chosen for protests and celebrations and parades. This is a very sensitive area of the city.

In order to plan police operations and also divert traffic to reduce traffic jams in an overcrowded city, social movements or the general public who want to protest or plan any type of street event are required by law to communicate this in advance with the police. They must indicate when and where the protest will occur, the number of people expected to attend, their route, and whether they will circulate in the area. According to a PRP official, "most organizations inform us and give the details required by law to us one week before the protest occurs."

However, the youth transport protest organizers never informed the police about the details of the protest or the route in advance, making it very difficult for the police to organize the traffic and plan which resources to use to deal with the protest. The protesters argued that because they are a collective, the group had to make the decision about the route to follow when they were all there.

The PRP members became very uneasy about this failure to follow the rules. As a military institution, the PRP likes planning and certainty. In addition, on several occasions, the protesters would agree on a route with the police and then change their minds while the protest unfolded. Sometimes they would even walk the wrong way down streets full of cars, frustrating the PRP officers who were trying to follow them. Thus, there is tension between how the protest is organized and takes place and the police's institutional logic of order. For example, one police officer said, "I hate that left-wing bastard who makes people invade buildings [referring to a leader of the city's homeless movement who uses invading unoccupied buildings as a form of protest for better city housing policies], but he does what he agrees on with us. His protests are very well organized and trouble-free."

In addition to this tension, the police regard the attitudes of the protesters as objectionable. As a result, they see them as illegitimate and undeserving of protection. Indeed, they are a threat to the order of society, and it is the job of the police to protect society, even if doing so involves violence. For example, police officers complained about what they regarded as the inappropriate behavior of the protesters during protests. A commander said, "Did you see? These girls with mini-skirts and tattoos, and kissing the other girl? Doesn't she have a family?" These types of comments were very common. Moreover, most protesters were young people who smoked marijuana while protesting. Using drugs in Brazil is a low-level criminal offense. Furthermore, the protesters liked to provoke the police officers. They made offensive comments to individual police officers and chanted slogans against the police, for example, asking the government to close down the PRP. Several times the researcher saw protesters making very derogatory comments to police officers, such as "You are only here because you are a loser!" or making provocative comments, such as "You are a killer; you like to kill poor people in the slums." The police became very angry about being denigrated in public. As put by one of them: "People don't respect us anymore. They say horrible things to us. It is very annoying."

Moreover, the police regarded the protesters as being left-wing because they complained about public transport and carried symbols such as flags and shirts praising anarchy and communism. The PRP officers are very conservative, and most officers profess a right-wing political ideology. On one occasion, a police major who saw some of the protesters' flags said: "They are all left wingers. That is what they do. They make a mess and solve nothing." Others commented, "These protests create a lot of traffic problems for the good citizen who wants to get back home from work."

The police officers also seemed to praise those who supported a far-right-wing ideology. For example, one protest passed by a bar known to be frequented by a neo-Nazi gang called "the bold ones." Upon passing the bar, members of the "bold ones" went to the door and started to swear at the protesters. Protesters told the police that one of the members had a gun pointed at the protesters. The police just ignored their calls and did nothing. Later, a commander said to the researcher: "I wish I could take my troop out and let the bold ones do the job." The same commander said he watches a lot of movies from the Second World War and has "admiration for the Nazis." He also said some of the tactics used by

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Dimensions of Tension	PRP		Protesters
Way of Organizing	Military	X	Disorganized
Identity	Warrior	X	Rule Challenger
Ideology	Conservative/Right-Wing	X	Liberal/Left-Wing

FIGURE 3 Dimensions of tensions. Own elaboration.

the police in the protest were inspired by "the Nazi blitzkrieg." There is tension between the identity of the protesters and the identity of the police officers, and this tension arises from the assumption that there are two types of citizens in society; those deserving protection and those not, exposing them to violence.

Furthermore, the protests would often run for several hours, meaning that police officers had to follow the protesters around the city. As one officer complained, "I am here carrying a helmet, a shield, and a baton for several hours. I get home very tired and need to work the next day." Moreover, many of the police officers were working extra shifts because the PRP did not have enough officers on duty to perform their normal activities and oversee the youth transport protests. Toward the end of the protest, the black blocs usually smashed some bank windows, and the police reacted violently. Thus, there is also a tension between how the protests unfolded and the working conditions of the PRP. As Figure 3 illustrates, the police and the protestors clashed with regard to following the rules, their identity, and their ideology.

Justifications for police violence: Desire for revenge and having fun

Violence in the protests is perpetrated both by some protestors (i.e., the black blocs) and by police officers. If the PRP follows an institutional logic of force, it is in the actual protests that the logic of force is translated into violence. Typically, at the end of the protests, the black blocs, whom the police and media refer to as "vandals," usually caused damage to property. The PRP then responds with rubber bullets and tear gas that often hit violent and nonviolent protesters alike. In practice, the PRP treats all protesters as "vandals," although very few committed violent acts during the protests. The PRP regards these acts of vandalism as disrespectful to the police and to society. Therefore, they associate the participants in the protests with criminal actions. As one commander said: "These vandals are criminals. They make our streets unsafe, and we have to hunt them down!" While the police apparatus and the general media devote their efforts to "fighting the vandals," there is also the alternative media, which the PRP considers to be acting on behalf of the vandals and the protesters. They film police violence and make it public. In response to this, one police commander said, "The media needs to decide what we should do! If we act, we are violent. If we don't, we are useless. We never win here!" There are also activist lawyers who usually go to the protests to try to defend the protesters from police abuse. These lawyers usually challenge the police's actions and try to get the arrested protesters released without any charge. One commander commented: "I hate them. They come here just to make trouble and to try to undermine our work."

The PRP sometimes respond to those who verbally offend them and physically assault them. For example, an officer said to the ethnographer: "When the protest started, there was a red-haired guy insulting me and other officers. I kept following him during the protest and I said to myself: I will get him. When the protesters broke a window and our commander allowed us to intervene, I ran after the guy until I managed hit him hard with my baton! I said he should never ever swear at a police officer again." In response to a question about protesters being hit in the eye by rubber bullets and losing their sight, one officer maintained that those protesters "deserved their fates."

Insulting protesters and being violent was a source of "fun" for police officers. They commented that they enjoyed chasing criminals and making difficult arrests. They described unusual interactions with protesters as "having a laugh." For example, one officer told the ethnographer: "I was on the top floor of a building using binoculars to inform my Captain where best to place the soldiers to throw chemical ammunition into the crowd. It was a lot of fun; it was like playing a video game." After the police aggressively dispersed the protesters, another police officer said to the ethnographer: "What a great night! It was a lot of fun seeing all those people running away desperately." Thus, for the police officers, their institutional logic of force is translated into a sense of revenge against the enemy and "having fun."

Getting away with violence: Lack of accountability

In practice, both the black blocs and police officers get away with their violent acts, even when they affect other protesters not involved in the violence. The state has been unable to articulate another response to the acts of violence. Very often, the PRP leadership complains about the lack of support from other institutions to deal with the protests. As one commander complained, "The State leaves us alone to deal with these protesters. Where is the public attorney, where is the city council, where are the detectives? We are alone; they leave us to deal with this and no one cares." For example, according to the Brazilian police system, once a crime takes place, it is the job of the detective police to carry out the investigation. However, the commanders from the PRP say, "Have you

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seen anybody from the detective police in a protest? No! They don't turn up; they don't care." In addition, when protestors are arrested on suspicion of criminal acts, the PRP takes them to the detective police station, where a police chief decides if there is enough evidence to make an arrest and present the case before a judge. However, in many cases, there is insufficient evidence to hold them. Therefore, the PRP pursued the vandals and took them to police station, only to see them released.

The PRP leadership also complained constantly about the public attorney. According to one commander: "The public attorney office has the legal instruments to give us the cover we need to act more firmly against these vandals. For example, they could forbid people who had been arrested from participating in any subsequent protest. Do they do it? Never! The only instrument I have here is to use force. Can we knock people down? No! So, what else can we do?" They noted that even the president of the state court had recognized the problem: "Yesterday I had a meeting with the court's president. He said that no one wants to get involved with these protesters. He clearly said he mentioned to the state government that our police force was alone in trying to deal with the vandals." Thus, the PRP officers felt they neither had the legal instruments nor the help from other state levels to act in the protests. As a result, the protestors who carried out violent acts in the protests were never held accountable for their actions.

On the other hand, the PRP seems to believe that the more force the police display and deploy, the more people will respect the police and not misbehave. However, despite the use of force by the PRP during the protests, the youth transport protests kept occurring, vandalism kept taking place, and the police's constant abuse of force damaged their reputation in the media. No police officer was disciplined for the abuse of power during the protests. According to one of the commanders, "Most of the time people don't come here to file a complaint. With no formal complaint, no investigation can begin. The ones who are hurt anyway are enemies of the police, so who cares?"

DISCUSSION

Our findings suggest that different factors interplay and influence the use of violence by street-level bureaucrats. In this section, we discuss the interplay among these factors, the contributions of this analysis to the literature, and the paradoxes behind the use of violence.

SLB use of violence: The interplay of factors

Our goal was to examine the use of violence by SLBs using the extreme case of police work in protests. Our findings suggest that four factors intersect and influence when and why SLBs resort to violence in their work: (1) the institutional logic that regards force as a key element in maintaining law and order results in police officers seeing themselves as warriors rather than guardians, (2) the characteristics of the situation they face, (3) the SLB's desire to take revenge and have fun, and (4) the lack of accountability.

Our findings suggest that, based on an institutional logic that reinforces the idea of warriors, SLBs feel that displays of strength are the mechanism through which they express their values. This is coherent with previous research that also found that culture matters in explaining the use of violence (Marenin, 2016; McLean et al., 2019; Myers-Montgomery, 2016; Rahr & Rice, 2015; Stoughton, 2016). However, we found that it is not only institutional logic that explains the SLB's use of violence. There are many protests in which the police act and no violence is deployed, as well as many encounters during which SLBs do not act violently.

Our findings show that other factors have to interplay for SLB violence to erupt. For example, the characteristics of the situation, including the dynamics of the context and the citizens. Other scholars have proposed that the racial characteristics of the citizens are important in explaining the use of police violence (De Lint, 2005; Bradford et al., 2017; Kochel, 2020; Cronin & Reicher, 2009; Newburn et al., 2018). In our case, however, the main explanation is not regarding racial profiles or minority groups, as previous research has discussed (Gaynor et al., 2021; Headley et al, 2020). Actually, our findings highlighted the differences in the attitudes toward order as well as the differences in identity and ideology between the SLBs and some types of citizens. In this case, the SLBs regard those who do not share their attitudes and mentality as a threat to society. The vast majority of the protesters were white. In this situation, SLBs saw their job as protecting society, even if doing so involved using force. Unlike previous studies, we found that more than simply the racial profile, it is the role played by certain types of citizens in specific situations that influences the use of force.

Moreover, we explained that considering the interplay of the particular institutional logic and the situation, SLBs used violence against citizens as a way to maintain order and demonstrate their superiority, exact revenge against citizens who disparage them, and have fun with workmates. Previous studies suggested that the sense police officers give to their work explains how they act (Benbenisty & Luria, 2021). However, to our knowledge, no previous work has signaled how the desire for revenge and having fun are important in violent acts.

Finally, our study shows how the lack of accountability on the part of both the SLBs and the protesters exacerbated the situation, prompting them both to engage in violent acts. Previous research also pointed out the importance of accountability in explaining SLBs' discretion (Hupe & Hill, 2007; Thomann, Hupe, & Sager, 2017). What

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we found is that when SLBs are left alone to deal with extreme situations and lack any other approach to contain them, they may resort to violence, given that the other three elements discussed previously are also present. Thus, a lack of accountability is important, but it only results in violence when the other factors presented here are associated with it.

The main contribution of our paper is to show that none of these factors alone can explain the use of violence. For example, the lack of accountability does not translate into violent acts against any kind of citizens, but only in particular situations when the SLB values immersed within a certain institutional logic are at odds with those of the citizens, and SLBs have a desire for revenge and have fun by being violent. Our findings suggest that the police categorize citizens into those who deserve protection and those whom it is permissible to attack to safeguard society. This distinction is present in all of the situations we examined. Previous research has also pointed out the importance of the evaluation about who deserves what at the street level (see, for example, Jilke & Tummers, 2018). However, those scholars were looking at what explains the unequal distribution of services. What our analysis shows is that the idea of who deserves what is also connected with the decision to act violently but alone it is insufficient to make violence erupt, as all the other elements pointed out above need to be present in order to have SLBs act violently. Moreover, we show that this decision is not guided by individual characteristics; rather, it is the institutional logic that creates and disseminates these ideas about which kinds of citizens should be treated with violence. The actions of the protesters brought these ideas to the fore in the reactions of the police. The officers exact their revenge on these types of citizens and enjoy doing so. However, our findings also show that this interplay between the institutional logic, the type of situation, and the desire for revenge and having fun is not enough to explain the use of violence. This is because SLBsonly engage in violent actions when they feel they are not observed or controlled. This is why the lack of accountability helps enable the police to engage in violence against citizens without further consequences.

Thus, based on the extreme case we analyzed, we can conclude that SLBs' violence cannot be explained by a single factor. All the factors analyzed previously in the literature presented above are necessary but not sufficient to explain the use of violence against citizens. We argue that the outcome of the interaction of a particular institutional logic comes to play in a situation where all of these elements and values are in tension with those of some citizens. SLBs in the context analyzed act violently out of revenge and to have fun at work. Figure 4 summarizes this argument.

Our findings make several contributions to the public administration literature. First, as explained above, our analyses discuss the interplay among institutional logic, the situation, the SLB's desire to exact revenge and have fun, and the lack of accountability, which together explain SLBs' use of violence. Previous scholars have proposed that some of these factors matter; however, we go further to paint a bigger picture and suggest that it is the interplay of all these factors that explains SLBs' use of violence against citizens.

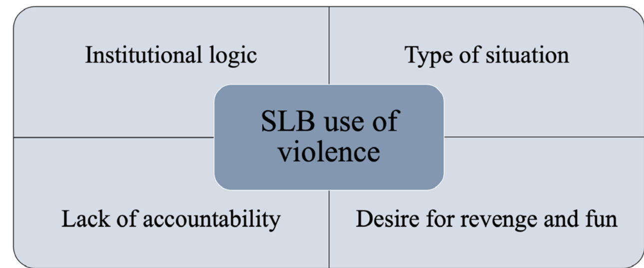

FIGURE 4 SLB use of violence. Own elaboration.

Second, and based on the first, our results indicate that no single element can explain the actions of SLBs regarding the use of violence. Previous research has pointed out that SLBs' actions must be considered in the context in which they make decisions (Brodkin, 2011; Lispky 2010). Scholars also suggest that organizational and institutional logics are important for explaining actions (Brodkin, 2012; Cohen, 2018; Epp et al., 2014; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2012). Research has also shown how the characteristics and behavior of citizens influence SLBs' decisions (Jilke & Tummers, 2018). We add to knowledge in this area by suggesting that the interplay between different factors can explain why other types of SLBs use violence (or not) against the citizens. For example, teachers who work in violent environments do not necessarily use violence, and health workers who engage with violent citizens do not necessarily react violently. We argue that the interplay between the four factors can explain violent reactions in other circumstances.

Our third contribution is linked to our findings regarding SLBs' accountability. Accountability refers to a social relationship in which a person feels obligated to justify his/her conduct to an outside entity, be it a person, an agency, or society at large (Meijer & Bovens, 2003). Accountability is a basic pillar of public administration, plays a major role in the implementation of policy (Thomann et al., 2017), and is associated with different sources (Hupe & Hill, 2007). One contribution of our findings is discussing that the lack of accountability is one of the factors explaining SLB violence, albeit not the main explanation.

Natural born violence?

When analyzing the different factors that explain the use of violence by police officers, the question remains: are the police violent individuals because violence and

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aggressiveness are part of their nature, or is their violence contextual? This question echoes the debate between Hobbes and Rousseau on aggression and violence. According to Hobbes (1990), humans have an aggressive nature and are focused on self-protection. War and conflict predominate in the Hobbesian state of nature, and "man is the wolf of man." To survive, people will give up part of their freedom by delegating to the sovereign—the Leviathan—the use of violence. Therefore, it is up to the State to establish order in society, imposing limits on freedom and the unrestricted use of violence. On the other hand, for Rousseau (1994), the nature of humans is gentle and peaceful. In the myth of the noble savage, humans would live together in a peaceful way, free and happy, fulfilling their nature. However, the institution of property and the resulting inequality lead to violence and war, which are antithetical to human nature. Thus, it is life in society that awakens violence in and among humans.

When analyzing the factors that influence the use of violence in protests, our findings suggest that the institutional context favoring a warrior view of law enforcement plays an important role in the use of violence. The violent characteristics of the institutions where these police officers are socialized are a fundamental (but not a sufficient) part of explaining the exercise of violence. However, at the same time, the context in which they act—protests—further stimulates and legitimizes the use of violence against some specific types of citizens.

But herein lies a paradox (Benbenisty & Luria, 2021). The police are supposed to exercise their power to maintain order (Hobbes, 1990; Spicer, 2007) with the goal of ensuring that the rules of the social contract are followed (Patterson, 2019). The government holds a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence through the police (Stroud, 2020). This paradox also emerges in the implementation literature. On the one hand, SLBs do help citizens and work as citizen agents (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). Sometimes, they will even risk their lives for them (Cohen, 2022). On the other hand, studies also show that under certain circumstances, they may use their discretion to deny, defer, and disregard the claims and needs of citizens, thereby limiting citizens access to benefits and redress mechanisms (Brodkin, 2009; Cohen, Benish, & Shamriz-Ilouz, 2016). Moreover, they may also intimidate citizens and heighten the asymmetry of information between themselves and citizens, increasing feelings of uncertainty in the latter in order to increase their material benefits and maximize their self-interest (Cohen & Gershgoren, 2016). The data from our study is are line with the latter group of studies. It shows that the police, who should be the guardians of law and order, use their power to reinforce hierarchies (Wacquant, 2018) under specific circumstances and against certain types of citizens. Our case demonstrates how a combination of authority and a sense of heroism turns into an abusive and, paradoxically, legitimate use of violence (Stroud, 2020), which is triggered and legitimated by institutional factors and specific situations.

Notwithstanding our contributions, our study has a major limitation inherent in our case study, context, and the methods studied. The case presented here is specific with regard to time, place, and policy content. Thus, we do not claim that precisely the same mechanism will operate in all circumstances or with all types of street-level bureaucrats. Indeed, our case study was an extreme one. Furthermore, we analyzed only protests in which violence occurred. In addition, we considered only the perspectives of the police officers. Thus, our findings are much more suitable for generalization for street-level bureaucrats who work in risky situations, such as guards in prisons or even parking inspectors. Nevertheless, we maintain that this extreme case does provide insights that can apply to other types of street-level bureaucrats.

Finally, it is important to highlight that one of the main critiques against ethnographic research is the lack of statistical generalizability (Pratt, 2007). This approach involves a trade-off between "depth and perspective for generalizability" (Morrill & Fine, 2016, p. 441). However, ethnographic research findings can be generalized using standards other than quantitative research (Morse, 1999). Doing so involves analytical generalizability, in which research findings are generalized not to a sample but to a theory (Pratt, 2007), and naturalistic generalizability, in which researchers develop understanding by reflecting on the specifics and explanations provided in the ethnographic research (Morrill & Fine, 2016). We do not claim that our research has statistical generalizability. However, we do maintain that our findings can provide insights into SLBs' use of violence against citizens.

CONCLUSIONS

SLBs' use of force against some citizens has a major impact on society. Researchers have discussed the role that race (Gaynor et al., 2021; Headley and Wright II 2020; Wright II and Headley 2020), institutional logics (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003), and SLBs' intentions (Davidovitz & Cohen, 2022) play in the violence perpetrated by SLBs. We add to this discussion by identifying that no single factor can explain the use of violence. They are all necessary conditions, but it is the interplay between them that influences the use of violence at the street level.

Our findings show that: first, the violence is a manifestation of the institutional logic underlying SLB work. Second, it relies on the type of situation SLBs and citizens are facing. Third, the use of violence also depends on the predispositions of the individual SLB to engage in this type of situation for "fun" or revenge against those they believe have disrespected them. This predisposition is reinforced by their training and socialization. Finally, their lack of accountability and their belief that those who engage in violent acts during protests will not be held accountable may prompt them to use force to control these situations.

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Some may argue that it is difficult to generalize the findings about one particular group of SLBs, such as police officers, to other types of SLBs, such as teachers. Isn't comparing police officers to teachers, for example, like comparing apples to oranges? In our view, following Lipsky's (2010) original proposal, we could and should investigate all types of street-level bureaucrats as a distinct group of bureaucrats. While we should stress the differences between police officers, teachers, doctors, and nurses, as well as other SLBs, we also recognize their common defining characteristics, especially the extensive discretion they have in their daily interactions with citizens. Indeed, as Davidovitz and Cohen (2022) and Lotta et al. (2021) demonstrate, social workers, doctors, nurses, teachers, and many other street-level bureaucrats experience physical conflicts with and violence from citizens. As such, in various cases, they may consider using violence in return. Hence, we maintain that we can cautiously generalize our findings to all types of street-level bureaucrats.

During our study, we saw that the media can impact SLBs' use of force. Therefore, we believe the role of the media in understanding SLB violence can be an interesting avenue for future research. Moreover, additional study is needed to expand the analysis, including cases of other types of protests, other contexts, and SLBs, to examine how the factors we identified manifest themselves in different settings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our profound gratitude to the attendees of the seminars held at Insper (Brazil) and Copenhagen Business School, where earlier iterations of our paper were presented. Their insightful feedback proved invaluable to the development of this work. Furthermore, we extend our appreciation to the three reviewers and the editor for their thorough engagement with our manuscript, which significantly contributed to its refinement. Many thanks also to Gustavo Tavares and Michael Hill for helping us improve our manuscript. Gabriela Lotta thanks FAPESP for supporting her research (Processes 2019/13439-7 and 2019/24495-5).

ENDNOTES

[1] We are aware that the term "client" has been used in SLB research since Lipsky's seminal work (1980). However, we preferred to use the term "citizen" proposed by Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003) to designate people with whom the police interact and serve because we believe the term reinforces the idea that everyone should be treated equally before the law. Furthermore, citizens should have status vis- à-vis the state (Zacka 2017). The implication is that the police are not expected to choose sides in a dispute and should control the use of violence regardless of who its target is.

[2] https://super.abril.com.br/sociedade/letalidade-policial-no-brasil-e-cinco-vezes-maior-que-nos-eua/

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How to cite this article: Alcadipani, Rafael, Gabriela Lotta, and Nissim Cohen. 2024. "Natural Born Violence? Understanding street-Level Bureaucrats' Use of Violence: Police Officers and Protests." *Public Administration Review* 84(1): 100–114. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13670

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